

**The
Ship-
mannes
Tale**

It shal be doon, right as ye wol devyse.
O thyng, er that ye goon, if it may be:
I wolde prey yow for to lene me
An hundred frankes, for a wyke or tweye,
for certein beestes that I moste beye,
To stoore with a place that is oures;
God helpe me so, I wolde that it were yours.
I shal nat faille surely at my day,
Nat for a thousand frankes, a mile way.
But lat this thyng be secrete, I yow preye,
for yet tonyght this beestes moot I beye,
And fare now wel, myn owene cosyn deere,
Graunt mercy of youre cost and of youre cheere!
This noble marchant gentilly anon
Answerde, and seyde, O cosyn myn, Daun John,
Now sikerly this is a smal requeste;
My gold is yours, whan that it yow leste,
And nat oonly my gold, but my chaffare;
Take what yow list, God shilde that ye spare.
But o thyng is, ye knowe it wel ynogh,
Of chapmen, that hir moneie is hir plogh;
We may creunce whil we have a name,
But goldlees for to be, it is no game;
Paye it agayn whan it lith in youre ese;
After my myght ful fayn wolde I yow plesse.
Thise hundred frankes he fette hym forth anon,
And prively he took hem to Daun John;
No wight in al this world wiste of this loone,
Savyng this marchant and Daun John alloone.
They drynke, and speke, & rome awhile, & pleye,
Til that Daun John rideth to his abbeye.
The morwe cam, and forth this marchant rideth
To flaundesward; his prentys wel hym gydeth,
Til he cam into Brugges murily.
Now gooth this marchant faste and bisily
Aboute his nede, and byeth and creunceth;
He neither pleyeth at the dees, ne daunceth;
But as a marchant, shortly for to telle,
He let his lyf, and there I lete hym dwelle.
The Sunday next this marchant was agon,
To Seint Denys ycomen is Daun John,
With crowne and berde all fressh and newe
yshave.
In al the hous ther nas so litel a knave,
Ne no wight elles, that he nas ful fayn
for that my lord Daun John was come agayn.
And shortly, to the point right for to gon,
This faire wyf accorded with Daun John
That for this hundred frankes he sholde alnyght
Have hire in his armes bolt upright,
And this acord parfourned was in dede.
In myrthe al nyght a bisy lyf they lede
Til it was day, that Daun John wente his way,
And bad the meynee, farewell, have good day!
for noon of hem, ne no wight in the toun,
hath of Daun John right no suspicioun.
And forth he rydeth hoom to his abbeye,
Or where hym list; namoore of hym I seye.
His marchant, whan that ended was the
faire,
To Seint Denys he gan for to repaire,
And with his wyf he maketh feeste and cheere,
And telleth hire that chaffare is so deere

That nedes moste he make a chevyssaunce;
for he was bounde in a reconyssaunce,
To paye twenty thousand sheeld anon;
for which this marchant is to Parys gon,
To borwe of certein freendes that he hadde
A certeyn frankes; and somme with him he ladde.
And whan that he was come into the toun,
for greet chiertee and greet affeccoun,
Unto Daun John he gooth hym first, to pleye;
Nat for to axe or borwe of him moneye,
But for to wite and seen of his welfare,
And for to tellen hym of his chaffare,
As freendes doon whan they been met yfeere.
Daun John hym maketh feeste & murie cheere,
And he hym tolde agayn, ful specially,
How he hadde wel ybought and graciously,
Thanked be God! al hool his marchandise;
Save that he moste, in alle maner wise,
Maken a chevyssaunce, as for his beste,
And thanne he sholde been in joye and reste.
Daun John answerde, Certes I am fayn,
That ye in heele ar comen hom agayn,
And if that I were riche, as have I blisse,
Of twenty thousand sheeld shold ye nat mysse,
for ye so kyndely this oother day
Lente me gold; and as I kan and may
I thanke yow, by God and by Seint Jame!
But natheles I took unto oure dame,
Your wyf, at hom, the same gold ageyn
Upon youre bench; she woot it wel, certeyn,
By certeyn tokenes that I kan yow telle.
Now, by youre leve, I may no longer dwelle;
Oure abbot wole out of this toun anon,
And in his compaignye moot I goon.
Grette wel oure dame, myn owene nece sweete,
And farewell, deere cosyn, til we meete!
His marchant, which that was ful war & wys,
Creanced bath, and payd eek in Parys
To certeyn Lumbardes, redy in hir hond
The somme of gold, and hadde of hem his bond;
And hoom he gooth, murie as a papejay,
for wel he knew he stood in swich array
That nedes moste he wyne in that viage
A thousand frankes above al his costage.
His wyf ful redy mette hym atte gate,
As she was wont of oold usage algate,
And al that nyght in myrthe they bisette;
for he was riche and cleerly out of dette.
Whan it was day, this marchant gan embrace
his wyf al newe, and kiste hire on hir face,
And up he gooth and maketh it ful tough.
Namoore, quod she, by God, ye have ynough!
And wantownely agayn with him she pleyde;
Til atte laste, thus this marchant seyde:
By God, quod he, I am a litel wrooth
With yow, my wyf, although it be me looth.
And woot ye why? By God, as that I gesse,
That ye han maad a manere straungenesse
Bitwixen me and my cosyn Daun John;
Ye sholde han warned me, er I had gon,
That he yow hadde an hundred frankes payed
By redy tokene; and heeld hym yvele apayed,
for that I to hym spak of chevyssaunce;

Me semed so as by his contenance.
But natheles, by God, oure hevne kyng,
I thought nat to axen hym no thyng.
I prey thee, wyf, ne do namoore so;
I prey the alwey, er that I fro thee go,
Telle me alwey, er that I fro thee go,
If any dettour hath in myn absence
Ypayed thee; lest, thurgh thy negligence,
I myghte hym axe a thing that he hath payed.
His wyf was nat afered nor affrayed,
But boldely she seyde, and that anon:
Marie, I deffie the false monk, Daun John!
I kepe nat of his tokenes never a deel,
he took me certeyn gold, that woot I weel.
What! yvel thedom on his monkes snowte!
That he hadde yewe it me bycause of yow,
for, God it woot, I wende, withouten doute,
To doon therwith myn honour and my prow,
for coynage, and eek for beele cheere
That he hath had ful ofte tymes heere.
But sith I se I stonde in this disjoynt,
I wol answer yow shortly, to the poynt.
Ye han mo slakhere dettours than am I,
for I wol paye yow wel and redily
fro day to day; and if so be I faille,
I am youre wyf; score it upon my taille,
And I shal paye, as soon as ever I may;
for by my trouthe, I have on myn array,
And nat on wast, bistowed every deel.
And for I have bistowed it so weel
for youre honour, for Goddes sake, I seye,
As be nat wrooth, but lat us laughe and pleye.
Ye shal my joly body have to wedde;
By God! I wol nat paye yow but abedde.
forgyve it me, myn owene spouse deere;
Turne hideward, and maketh bettre cheere!
This marchant saugh ther was no remedie,
And for to chide, it nere but greet folie,
Sith that the thyng may nat amended be.
Now, wyf, he seyde, and I forgyve it thee,
But by thy lyf, ne be namoore so large;
Keepe bet oure good, that yeve I thee in charge.
Thus endeth now my tale, and God us sende
Taillynge ynough unto oure lyves ende.
Amen. Heere endeth the Shipmannes Tale.

**Bihold the murie wordes of the Hoost to the
Shipman, and to the lady Prioressse.**
E. I seyde! by corpus do-
minus, quod our hooste;
Now longe moot thou
saille by the coste,
Sire gentil maister,
gentil maryneer!
God yeve this monk a
thousand last quade
yeer!
A ha! felawes, beth ware
of swiche a jape!
The monk putte in the mannes hood an ape,

And in his wyves eek, by Seint Austyn!
Draweth no monkes moore unto youre in.
But now passe over, and lat us seke aboute,
Who shal now telle first, of al this route,
Another tale; and with that word he sayde,
As curteisly as it had ben a mayde,
My lady Prioressse, by youre leve,
So that I wiste I sholde yow nat greve,
I wolde demen that ye tellen sholde
A tale next, if so were that ye wolde.
Now wol ye vouchesauf, my lady deere?
Gladly, quod she, and seyde as ye shal heere.

The prologe of the Prioresses Tale.
Domine, dominus noster.

LORD, oure Lord, thyname
how merveillous
Is in this large world ysprad,
quod she;
for noght oonly thy laude
precious
Parfourned is by men of
dignitee,
But by the mouth of chil-
dren thy bountee
Parfourned is; for on the brest soukyng
Somtyme shewen they thyn herynge.

Wherfore in laude, as I best kan or may,
Of thee, and of the white lylye flour
Which that thee bar, and is a mayde alway,
To telle a storie I wol do my labour;
Nat that I may encreessen hir honour;
for she hirself is honour, and the roote
Of bountee, next hir sone, and soules boote.

O mooder mayde! O mayde mooder fre!
O bussch unbrent, brennyng in Moyses sighte,
That ravysedest down fro the Deitee,
Thurgh thyn humblesse, the goost that in tha-
lighte;
Of whos vertu, whan he thyn herte lighte,
Conceyved was the fadres sapience,
Helpe me to telle it in thy reverence!

Lady! thy bountee, thy magnificence,
Thy vertu, and thy grete humylitee
Ther may no tonge expresse in no science;
for somtyme, lady, er men praye to thee,
Thou goost biforn of thy benygnytee,
And getest us the tyght thurgh thy preyere,
To gyden us unto thy sone so deere.

My konnyng is so wayk, O blisful queene,
for to declare thy grete worthynesse,
That I ne may the weighte nat sustene,
But as a child of twelf monthe oold or lesse,
That kan unnethes any word expresse,
Right so fare I, and therefore I yow preye,
Gydeth my song that I shal of yow seye.

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